

## For Immediate Release

### NEW JERSEY WATERSHED INCLUDED IN HISTORIC EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

**Somerset, NJ, Nov. 3, 2004** – The Cohansey-Maurice watershed in southwest New Jersey is among 202 watersheds across the nation invited to participate in a historic new program designed to reward farmers for long-term stewardship. U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced the selected watersheds yesterday and said that sign-ups for the 2005 Conservation Security Program (CSP) would begin this winter.

CSP, part of the 2002 Farm Bill, was introduced last summer in 18 watersheds nationwide. In this first opportunity for farmers from each state to participate, about one eighth of the Nation's eligible farmers will be given the chance to apply each year over an eight-year period.

“As an agency and as a Nation we have helped farmers and ranchers fix conservation problems such as soil erosion or water conservation since the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s,” said Tony Kramer, New Jersey State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) overseeing CSP. This, however, represents a whole new direction in conservation and agricultural policy and programs. These payments for demonstrable long-term stewardship will reward many of those who undertook conservation on their own initiative and who care for the resources we all share.”

Furthermore the program is available on pastureland and all types of cropland—including New Jersey vegetable operations.

Participants will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on their farm or ranch. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment as well as their willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

NRCS will offer local workshops in the Cohansey-Maurice watershed to more fully explain the program to interested potential participants.

CSP will continue to be offered each year in New Jersey, on a rotational basis, in as many watersheds as funding allows. For more information on CSP and other NRCS programs visit the NJ NRCS website <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs>.

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